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ABSTRACT

This paper describes part of a larger study dealing with syntax and semantics of the child's early speech about motion and location. It suggests that goal, defined as the point at which a motion ends and a resulting locative state begins, is the organizing principle for the semantics of motion and location. The data presented here are from two children aged one year and one and a half years at the beginning of the study. A consideration of conflicting opinions on the goal question led to the decision to consider the children's complete language system and its changes through time for clues. Examination of the two children's speech revealed that "on" and "there" utterances are used to refer to both action and state, and that locative forms arise mainly from English adverbs and two-part verbs. Speech of older children also suggests that the definition of motion in terms of end state persists. Much recent research supports the finding that the early stages of speech seem to be goal-oriented and that as children continue their development they continue to use more explicit goal expressions. (AMH)

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THE PRIMACY OF GOAL IN THE CHILD'S DESCRIPTION OF MOTION AND LOCATION

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The study of young children's syntax and semantics in recent years has produced some areas of agreement in the field and some of disagreement. In no area has there been so much disagreement, based, until recently, on so little evidence, as in the description of the child's locative semantics--for instance, whether the child's locative forms are nouns, particles or prepositions, whether they describe actions or states, come in early or late, etc. This paper describes a portion of a larger study dealing with the syntax and semantics of the child's early speech about motion and location. In particular, I would like to suggest that "goal" is the organizing principle for the semantics of motion and location. For the purposes of this paper, "goal" is used in the sense of the point at which a motion ends and a resulting locative state begins. Goal is the end point of a motion, the beginning point of a state, and the tie between the two. In this sense, it is related to non-locative processes and resulting states such as eat, all gone.

The data presented here are from two of the three children I studied. One was almost exactly one year old at the beginning of the study, the other was a little more than 1½. Tape recordings of 60 to 90 minutes were made in their homes every week or two weeks for several months.

In selecting utterances from the transcripts of those tapes for analysis, I did two things which differ from several other recent studies of locative forms. One was that I included all utterances which seemed to deal with motion or location, whether they had one word, two words or more. Since I was primarily interested in determining the range of meaning of various forms in relation to the world, rather than their relational meaning with respect to other forms in the utterance or surrounding utterances, I could see no reason to exclude either one word or multi-word utterances. This approach differs from others such as Greenfield and Smith (1976) and Bloom, Lightbown and Hood (1975).

The second difference was that I took a much broader view of what constitutes a locative form than some other researchers have. I did not limit my analysis to members of one word class or to forms in which location is "foregrounded". Different languages have different ways of lexicalizing the

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various underlying locative relations. What is one surface form in one language may require two or more forms in another:

Example	Includes	Lang. Using
rain	V includes Obj. moving	Atsugewi
enter,	V includes direction	Spanish
ascend		
float, roll,	V includes manner of	English,
walk	movement	Russian
home	Adv. includes Prep. obj. (obj. form)	Atsugewi
up, in,	Adv. includes Prep. obj. (prep. form)	English,
on		German

(After Talmy 1975)

Moreover, within any language, we have options for foregrounding or backgrounding various aspects of the situation. English can use many different descriptions of a certain event, depending on which aspects we wish to emphasize. For example: The bottle moved into the cove (floating); the bottle entered the cove (floating); the bottle floated into the cove; the bottle floated in; the bottle moved/went in. (After Talmy 1975). The child is apparently able to learn whatever system shows up in his first language, but there is no reason to expect that every child will make the right hypothesis from the start. Thus, we should assume that different children might make different hypotheses about the semantic contents of a locative word.

When I had selected the utterances from my transcripts which seemed, in relation to the non-linguistic context, to be commenting about location or motion, I found that forms corresponding to adult adverbs or verb particles (on, in, down) and forms which have been called prolocatives (there) predominated, as has been noted before (Brown 1973, Bowerman 1973, Bloom 1970). A further study of the use of these forms showed that they were almost invariably used in situations involving action, frequently action by the child, but that these situations also resulted in a distinct end state. The question of whether these words describe action or state has no obvious answer, and it has been answered several ways in the past. Bloom, Lightbown and Hood (1975) claimed that all these uses are action uses, concluding that locative action expression precedes that of locative state. Menyuk (1971), on the other hand, claimed that such utterances describe states or desired states. Other investigators have tended to interpret them as one or another depending on the timing of the utterance with relation to the action involved (as action if occurring with the action, or as state if occurring after the action when a state has been reached). However, I concluded that there was no good way to decide by looking at the utterances themselves, a position also taken by Greenfield and Smith (1976) and by Werner and Kaplan (1963). When faced with such a

dilemma, however, it is sometimes useful to look at the child's complete language system and its change through time for clues. When I did this, I found evidence to suggest that at the early stage, utterances such as "on" are neither action nor state utterances but are both--that children are organizing their locative system in terms of goal: that point at which an action ends and the resultant end-state begins.

One bit of evidence for this conclusion is the absence in the earliest child systems of any forms which describe pure action or pure state, whether locative or not. Amy's system in Table 1 illustrates such an early system. The forms displayed for Amy at 13 months, 24 days and at 14 months include virtually everything she said except for object names used to point out objects or ask for them. At the first session, Amy had one highly variable form which referred to all sorts of locative actions, all of the kind with end states. A similar form may or may not have been a different word, but seemed to have more of the meaning of 'up'. Amy also used down, and chair when trying to climb onto a chair. The only other forms were a transfer word used while giving, taking or getting something, more to ask for something back, and all gone with reference to situations in which she is eating or drinking. A week later, her system is much the same. Only the use of 2,3 does not fit my claim, but its genesis and range of application were peculiar in many ways.

In summary, Amy had several forms used in a variety of motion/location situations, but no words which describe action per se or state per se. This is that stage at which I will claim that the locative forms represent an amalgamated action or motion and state.

The first data from Joshua in Table 2 represent a transitional stage. In addition to down, up, and there which are similar to Amy's forms in their use in motion/state situations, he uses one verb--put this--which might be analyzed as an action form, although it is used in too limited a situation to analyze fully. He has forms which accompany non-completed action, e.g. rock by while rocking in a chair. About two weeks later, Joshua has clearly arrived at a new stage. He uses verbs with two particles--sit down and go byby, and he has forms which describe non-completive activities and states: eat, help, hot, nice, hurtie. He may even use the locative form up as a state while pointing to a picture on the wallpaper, but the evidence is not clear. A week after this time, there are many more action verbs and a definite form describing an iterative, non-completive motion--round & round. On also occurs as a preposition at this time, the first form to be used in this way.

The finding that the earliest forms are amalgamated action/state forms is similar to the suggestion by Greenfield and Smith (1976) that these same forms represent change of state. I do

not like this particular term as it seems to give priority to the notion of state (including the state of motion?) rather than to the unity of motion and result, but perhaps the difference is merely terminological. Bloom, Lightbown and Hood's (1975) claim that action verbs clearly occur before locative forms might be an artifact of looking only at multiword utterances, since so many children use particle-like words before any verbs. Bloom herself (1970) suggests that different sets of verbs tend to occur in one and two word utterances.

The finding that there is a stage which predates the separation of action and state, and that this stage is characterized by the use of locative forms, suggests that the organization of the locative system around goal may indeed take place. Another kind of evidence is the use by many children of some special form to mark achievement, including achievement of location. Frequently it is the form there, often with an exclamatory intonation. Joshua uses such a form, as does Allison Bloom (Table 3). A similar usage has been reported by others, including Ervin-Tripp (1977). This ability of the child to talk about the achievement of goal or the completion of an action suggests that such a concept may indeed be part of his linguistic organization.

It is quite clear that children's particle locative forms arise mainly from English adverbs and two part verbs. These adult forms are perceptually prominent in English, occurring as they do at the end of sentences and carrying stress (cf. Slobin 1971). It is interesting to observe, given this source, that adult verb particles contain much the same sort of meaning I have hypothesized for children. In his book on "phrasal verbs," Bolinger (1971) says: "In its core meaning... the particle must contain two features, one of motion-through-location, the other of terminus or result" (pg. 85). This suggests that the amalgamation of meaning centering on goal may result not from the child's cognitive or semantic organization, but may be provided by the language he is learning. However, some other work suggests the reverse--that verb particles may have such a meaning in adult English precisely because it is a natural sort of combination.

Older children still show that the definition of motion in terms of its end state persists. Antinucci and Miller (1976) found that both Italian and English speaking children first use the past tense as a marker of perfect aspect, tying past action to present state. Clark and Garnica (1974) found that the younger children they tested consistently chose the person at the goal of the motion when asked to identify the speaker or addressee of utterances containing deictic verbs. Piaget (1970) also suggests that children first describe motion in terms of the end points, especially the resultant location.

In more general terms, a sentence describing motion can imply a sentence describing the resulting state: "He has gone home" implies that "He is home". Kurylowicz suggests that it is common to find a single morphological form for goal and locative, at least in Indo-European (1964).

Given all of this evidence, it is surprising to find that Macrae (1976) has recently come to exactly the opposite conclusion, that children do not express goal in their utterances until after age 3. Macrae's study concerned the deictic verbs come and go as they occurred in the spontaneous speech of children from 15 months to 3 years. She found that two year olds used come and go with particles very frequently, but almost never with the preposition to. She also finds that the forms in, on, off, up, down and out were used as "prepositions" before being used with go and come, although I cannot take this finding at face value since up and down which she lists as the first prepositions used correctly are not prepositions at all in adult English and can only be used as such in a derived sense. Presumably she is referring to single word utterances or forms such as "up chair".

Because of the absence of utterances containing go plus goal expression, or even of noun-noun utterances with the second noun expressing goal in her data, Macrae concludes that "it is hard to find instances in the data where the child describes motion towards and terminating at a particular location" and that "the children in our sample are more interested in describing the contour of movement than in indicating change of location as such."

For the most part, this different set of conclusions is the result of a different set of definitions. A goal expression, according to Macrae, should be a surface noun, preferably with the preposition to; Particle words describe the contour of movement and do not include the notion of goal, and so forth. It is certainly true that children do not make nice neat surface goal expressions of the kind Macrae describes. But the early stages I have described seem to me to be goal oriented, and as these children continue their development, they continue to use more explicit goal expressions. At 20 months, 7 days, Joshua said such things as:

I want put that, on toast
I want some
Butter put it, on toast

and

This no on (forbidding himself to put salt
on his toast)

and

a shoes
a want outside (=I want to go outside)

and

I'll sit down here.

Now, while there are no utterances at this session containing to, and very few with go, I think it definitely wrong to say that Joshua is not expressing goal or that he is not interested in resulting location. In studying early child language, we must go beyond simple surface definitions and look for the probable semantic and cognitive underpinnings of the child's language. Just as we cannot assume that the child's use of a form means that the child understands that form in the adult sense, we cannot assume that the absence of a specific form means that the child is not expressing the meaning which underlies it in adult language.

Table 1

Amy Age 13 months, 24 days MLU 1.00

a²?³? -----5x playing with "door" on tape recorder case
 (snapping and unsnapping)
 --trying to stand up on couch
 --climbing into lap
 --2x wants bib on
 --wants bib off
 --wants toy from bed
 --runs to get doll when M asks "Where's your baby?"
 --2x climbing from pillow
 --wants off chair
 --wants me to take off my watch and give it to her
 --taking clothes from shelf
 A[?] -----3x wants to get into lap/getting into lap
 --climbing onto couch
 --standing after falling
 --as mother gets music box down for her
 --going to put toys in the box
 down-----putting animals on floor
 --after falling
 chair-----6x trying to climb into chair
 Other forms--transfer word, more--wants something back,
all gone--M is getting some coffee.

Any Age 14 months

a²? -----wants to get up on couch
 --climbs up to look out window
 --reaching for M's things on table
 --2x picking up toys
 --imitating on (3x) and off (1x)
 hahaha-----6x climbing into lap, asking to get into lap
 --after putting on hat
 --changing position in lap
 --wants to ride horsey on M's leg
 --wants to climb onto table
 hahaha-----3x wants to get into lap

Table 1 Continued

nightnight-----2x puts, has put something into bed
 boom-----has fallen
 all go -----drinking
 2,3-----about to act

Table 2

Joshua Age 19 months 2 weeks MLU Approximately 1.33

down-----4x placing blocks in a row on the floor
 --6x running to pick up ball which F has thrown
 up-----wishes to climb on or off M's lap (several x)
 --wants to be picked up
 there-----3x placing blocks in a row on the floor
 --taking block from toy box
 --offering ball to a visitor
 put this-----placing blocks in a row on the floor
 forms accompanying non-terminated action:
 wawawawa--continuous noise while scooting along floor
 rock by --in sing song while rocking in chair.
 other forms: attention directors--here, see
 transfer of possession--didi
 disorientation--ohoh, whoops
 encounter, visibility--hi, byby
 recurrence--another
 completion--anymore, all

Joshua Age 20 months

down-----hiding below something, wants to get down
 from changing table
 sit down-----J sits/will sit on floor, J wants others
 to sit
 up-----things popping up, (possibly) position on wall
 on-----clothing being put on J, wants clothing on
 off-----taking off clothing, wants clothing off
 in-----going into house
 go byby-----going out of house
 come
 with-----accompaniment
 there-----achievement of location
 Also: deixis--here, there, see
 visibility--byby, hi
 disorientation--ohoh
 possession--get, more, want, some, have, my
 activity--eat, help, do (of locative action)
 attributes--hot, nice, hurtie
 end marker--done

Joshua Age 20 months, 1 week

Also uses ride, dancing, sing, drink, said, touch &
 round & round. On occurs as a preposition.

Table 3 Achievement markers:

Joshua (19;2)	there!	(Knocking over a tower)
Joshua (20)	hat	(Holding out hat)
	there	(Places on head)
Allison (19;2)	down	(sliding off chair,
	there/down!	is off)

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